Explicitness lost

Homophony between non-singular person categories

Michael Cysouw

(ZAS, Berlin)

cysouw@zas.gwz-berlin.de

1. Introduction

– The six-person paradigm (with an occasional inclusive/exclusive opposition) is common, yet it is by far not the only kind of person paradigm.

– In this paper, I will present examples of person paradigms with homophony in the non-singular. Other sources of paradigmatic variation will be disregarded here: homophony in the singular and homophony between the singular and the non-singular.

– Only cases with complete homophony are included: the homophonous forms are completely the same within the language. Near homophony or likeliness is not enough. The term 'homophony' is intended as a theory-neutral indication that various categories are marked identical within a person paradigm.

– Paradigms of person marking are included individually: inflectional 'person agreement' and independent personal pronouns are interpreted *a priori* as equivalent possibilities to mark categories of person.

– Non-singular person categories are analysed as different combinations of singular participants (1+2, 1+2+3, 1+3, 2+3, 3+3).

– The following examples are a collection of cases. They are not the result of a strict sampling procedure but of an unbounded search for 'unusual' cases. I welcome additions.

– The cases are ordered roughly geographically within each section: first languages from Africa, then Europe, Eurasia, Southeast Asia, New Guinea, Australia, and finally America from North to South.

2. Explicitness Hierarchy

The Explicitness Hierarchy can be though of as showing more and more homophony from left to right, starting from the marking of 'we', but invading the rest of the paradigms sequentially. If there is an inclusive/exclusive opposition in the paradigm, then there is only occasionally homophony in the non-singular. Is this really true?

	common					semi-common			rare	
Minimal vs. Augmented Inclusive	+	–	–	–	–	+	–	–	+	+
Inclusive vs. Exclusive	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	–	+	–
Absence of non-singular Homophony	+	+	+	–	–	+	–	+	–	–
Absence of singular Homophony	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	–	+	+

3. Homophony with no inclusive/exclusive opposition

Three non-singular categories:
– we (speaker and other, possibly also addressee)
– you-plural (addressee and other)
– they (multiple other)

Paradigms that distinguish all three categories by different morphemes are common. I know of the following cases of homophony:

> **3.1** we = you-plural
> (first and second person homophony)

– **Dogon** suffixes (Plungian, 1995: 30)
– **Dongola** suffixes (Reinisch, 1879: 65)
– **Svan** suffixes (Tuite, 1997: 28)
– **Nakh-Dagestanian** suffixes:
        Lak (Helmbrecht, 1996: 131)
        Dargi (van den Berg, 1999:155-156)
– **East New Guinea Highlands** independent pronouns:
        Awa (Loving, 1973: 85)
        Usarufa (Foley, 1986: 255)
– **Waskia** past suffixes (Ross & Paol, 1978: 67-68)
– **Yareba** independent pronouns (Weimer & Weimer, 1975: 675-690)
– **Yimas** independent pronouns (Foley, 1991: 111-114)
– **Athabascan** independent pronouns:
        Slave (Rice, 1989:253, 431)
        Navaho (Young & Morgan, 1987:7-8)
        Chiricahua Apache (Hoijer, 1946: 76, 78, 83)
        Kato (Goddard, 1912: 33)
        Hupa (Goddard, 1905: 29)
– **Ika** prefixes (Frank, 1990: 50-51)
– **Nez Perce** prefixes (Rude, 1985: 30-39)

3.2 you-plural = they
(non-first person homophony)

– **Slavonic** suffixes:
  Slovene (de Bray, 1951: 415-416; Priestly, 1993: 418)
  Upper Sorbian (de Bray, 1951: 743; Schuster-Sewc, 1996: 161-162)
– **Koryak** prefixes (Comrie, 1980: 64-67)
– **East New Guinea Highlands** independent pronouns/suffixes:
  Fore (Foley, 1986: 74, citing Scott 1978)
  Gadsup (Frantz & McKaughan, 1973: 440)
  Kalam (Foley, 1986: 71, citing Pawley 1966)
  Kewa (Franklin, 1971: 57-58)
  Kuman (Foley, 1986: 70, citing Piau 1985)
  Wiru (Foley, 1986: 72, citing Kerr 1966)
– **Baruya** suffixes (Wurm, 1975: 499, citing Lloyd 1973)
– **Yagaria** suffixes (Renck, 1975: 90-96)
– **Amele** independent pronouns (Roberts, 1987: 208)
– **Siroi** suffixes (Wells, 1979: 30-31)
– **Magi** suffixes (Thomson, 1975: 631-632)
– **Kombai** suffixes (de Vries, 1989: 145)
– **Nez Perce** independent pronouns (Rude, 1985: 123)
– **Chitimacha** suffixes (Swadesh, 1946: 317-318)
– **Warekena** independent pronouns (Aikhenvald, 1998: 293, 322)
– **Lengua Maskoy** suffixes (Susnik, 1977: 98)

3.3 we = they

– **Bagirmi** independent pronouns (Gaden, 1909:10)
– **Midob** suffixes (Thelwall, 1983: 107)
– **Germanic** suffixes:
  German (own data)
  Middle Dutch (Schönfeld, 1959: 144-145)
– **Omïë** suffixes (Austing & Upia, 1975: 544)
– **Binanderean** suffixes:
  Korafe (Farr & Farr, 1975: 747-749)
  Orokaiva (Healey *et al.*, 1969: 62)
– **Aleut** suffixes (Geoghegan, 1944: 51)

3.4 we = you-plural = they

– **Krongo** prefixes (Reh, 1985:185)
– **Lango** prefixes (Bavin, 1981: 90-91)
– **Germanic** suffixes:
  Dutch (own data)
  Old English (Robertson & Cassidy, 1954: 141)
– **Waskia** present suffixes (Ross & Paol, 1978: 67-68)

– **Koiari** suffixes (Dutton, 1996: 23)
– **Una** suffixes (Louwerse, 1988:31-32)

4. Homophony with inclusive/exclusive opposition

four non-singular categories:
> – inclusive we (speaker, addressee and possible others as well)
> – exclusive we (speaker and other)
> – you-plural (addressee and other)
> – they (multiple others

Paradigms that distinguish all four categories by different morphemes are common. I know of the following cases of homophony:

> **4.1** inclusive we = exclusive we
> (first person homophony)

– **Many**: all cases without an inclusive/exclusive opposition

> **4.2** inclusive we = you-plural
> (second person homophony)

– **Nama** 'pronominal root' (Haacke, 1977; Hagman, 1977: 43-44)
– **Puragi** independent pronouns (Voorhoeve, 1975: 439)
– **Luvakuleve** prefixes (Terrill, 1999: 222-223)
– **Tiwi** object prefixes (Osborne, 1974: 39)
– **Algonquian** prefixes (Bloomfield, 1946: 97-99):
> **Ojibwa** (Bloomfield, 1956: 44; Schwartz & Dunnigan, 1986: 305)
> **Menomini** (Bloomfield, 1962: 36-40)
> **Passamaquoddy-Maliseet** (Leavitt, 1996: 9-10)
– **Sanuma** independent pronouns (Borgman, 1990: 149)

> **4.3** you-plural = they
> (non-first person homophony)

– **Kunama** suffixes (Reinisch, 1881: 53; Bender, 1996: 19)
– **Kasuweri** independent pronouns (Voorhoeve, 1975: 439)
– **Suena** suffixes (Wilson, 1969: 97)
– **Korafe** independent pronouns (Farr & Farr, 1975: 734-735)

> **4.4** exclusive we = they
> (non-second person homophony)

– **Binandere** suffixes (Capell, 1969: 16-31)
– **Shuswap** suffixes (Kuipers, 1974: 45, 59)
– **Carib** prefixes:
> **Waiwai** (Hawkins, 1998: 178-179)
> **Hixkaryana** (Derbyshire, 1979: 146-149)

4.5 inclusive we = they

– **Tanna** prefixes (Lynch, 1967: 46-48):
      Lenakel (Lynch, 1978: 45)
      Kwamera (Lindstrom & Lynch, 1994: 12)
– **Huave** prefixes (Stairs & Hollenbach, 1969: 48-53)

4.6 exclusive we = you-plural

– **Lamalera** prefixes (Keraf, 1978: 74-76)
– **Burarra** prefixes (Glasgow, 1984)
– **Tiwi** intransitive subject prefixes non-past (Osborne, 1974: 38)

5. Homophony with minimal/augmented opposition

five non-singular categories:
      – minimal inclusive we (only speaker and addressee)
      – augmented inclusive we (speaker, addressee and others)
      – exclusive we (speaker and others)
      – you-plural (addressee and other)
      – they (multiple others)

Paradigms that distinguish all five categories by different morphemes are common. I know of the following cases of homophony:

5.1 augmented inclusive we = minimal inclusive we

– **Many**: all cases with an inclusive/exclusive distinction

5.2 augmented inclusive we = exclusive we

– **Kunimaipa** imperfect suffixes (Pence, 1968: 110; Geary, 1977: 26)
– **Bardi** prefixes (Metcalfe, 1975: 123)
– **Burarra** independent pronouns (Glasgow, 1964: 110-111; 1984: 15)
– **Lakhota** independent pronouns (Van Valin, 1977: 74-75)
– **(?) Miwok** independent pronouns (Callaghan, 1974: 386):
      Northern Sierra Miwok (Callaghan, 1987: 397-398)
      Plains Miwok (Callaghan, 1984: 296-297)

5.3 minimal inclusive we = exclusive we

– **Yaouré** independent pronouns (Hopkins, 1986: 192)
– **Kunimaipa** independent pronouns (Pence, 1968; Geary, 1977: 17-18)
– **Gooniyandi** independent pronouns (McGregor, 1989: 438-439; 1990: 167-169)

5.4 augmented inclusive we = exclusive we = you-plural

– **Kunimaipa** perfect suffixes (Pence, 1968: 110)

6. Conclusions

– 'strange' paradigmatic structures occur relatively frequent among the world's languages.

– The semantically coherent kinds of homophony are the most frequent. These kinds of homophony are occasionally found with independent pronouns, the others are always inflectional (one exception). The second person centered homophony is not very common.

– The lesser amount of homophony with an inclusive/exclusive distinction could be an effect of overall frequencies. Preliminary counts of a controlled sample indicate that paradigms without an inclusive/exclusive distinction are roughly twice as frequent as paradigms with an inclusive/exclusive distinction. The amount of cases with homophony as discussed in this paper is roughly equivalent with this ratio.

– Homophony of non-singular categories in paradigms with an inclusive/exclusive opposition is more common as I expected.

– Paradigms with a minimal/augmented distinction do not show homophony with *you-plural* or *they*.

– There is a geographical skewing in the cases as discussed above. Most cases with homophony turn out to be found around New Guinea, Australia and America.

7. References

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